

Certified Promotion: New Approaches to Classic Reading Promotion in University Libraries—A Case Study of Southwest Jiaotong University Library (Postprint)

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] To explore effective pathways for classic reading promotion that incentivize and affirm college students' classic reading behaviors, and strengthen the role and status of classic reading promotion in the talent cultivation process for university students.

[Method/Process] This paper conducts an empirical analysis of the certified classic reading promotion case at Southwest Jiaotong University Library. From four certification forms—"general education course certification, second classroom certification, 'Youth Marxist Project' cultivation program certification, and reading workshop certification"—and five evaluation methods—"testing method, conversation method, presentation method, observation method, and evidence method"—it provides an in-depth analysis of the certified classic reading promotion pathway and related issues.

[Results/Conclusion] Certified classic reading promotion can incentivize and affirm college students' classic reading behaviors, strengthen the status of classic reading promotion in the university education process, and constitutes a beneficial exploration for university libraries' classic reading promotion services in support of undergraduate teaching and talent cultivation.

Full Text

Certified Promotion: A New Path for Classical Reading Promotion in University Libraries—Taking Southwest Jiaotong University Library as an Example

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Abstract:

[Purpose/Significance] This study explores effective pathways for classical reading promotion that can incentivize and affirm college students' classical reading behaviors, thereby strengthening the role and position of such initiatives in talent cultivation. [Method/Process] Through empirical analysis of certified classical reading promotion cases at Southwest Jiaotong University Library, this paper examines the certification-based promotion pathway and related issues from four certification forms—"general education course certification, second classroom certification, Young Marxist Training Program certification, and reading workshop certification"—and five evaluation methods: "testing, conversation, presentation, observation, and evidence-based assessment." [Result/Conclusion] Certified classical reading promotion can effectively motivate and affirm students' classical reading behaviors, reinforce the status of reading promotion in university education, and provide valuable exploration for university library services in undergraduate teaching and talent development.

Keywords: university library; classical reading; certified promotion

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1. Introduction

The *National Reading "13th Five-Year" Development Plan* states: "We must focus on content and improve quality. The core of national reading lies in reading content" [1]. University students represent the future workforce for national scientific and technological development, and their comprehensive quality cultivation and character formation depend fundamentally on extensive, high-quality reading [2]. Classics reveal objective laws of things, constitute cultural symbols throughout history, and represent truths that people can read repeatedly to guide practice [3]. Therefore, promoting classical reading among university students holds significant practical and strategic importance.

Like many universities, Southwest Jiaotong University faces bottlenecks in classical reading promotion. While different campus entities (such as the Youth League Committee, Academic Affairs Office, Student Affairs departments, and various colleges) have initiated preliminary cooperation with the library, deep-level collaboration remains insufficient, and the library's contribution to student cultivation and ideological-political education is not adequately demonstrated. To address this, Southwest Jiaotong University Library has constructed an operational and feasible "certified" classical reading promotion pathway. This approach employs four forms—"general education course certification, second classroom certification, Young Marxist Training Program certification, and read-

ing workshop certification”—and utilizes five evaluation methods: “testing, conversation, presentation, observation, and evidence-based assessment.” Centered on the classical texts contained in the *Southwest Jiaotong University Classical Reading Recommendation List*, this certified promotion model aims to motivate students’ enthusiasm for classical reading and enhance the library’s positive role in talent cultivation.

2. Research and Analysis

2.1 Research Background and Content Southwest Jiaotong University is an engineering-focused institution primarily dedicated to cultivating advanced engineering and scientific research talent. While its engineering programs thrive, this emphasis has led to issues such as overemphasis on instrumental rationality in technical training at the expense of humanities cultivation and ethical education [5]. Consequently, the university has implemented classical reading as a vehicle for general education. Since 2014, Southwest Jiaotong University has published the *Southwest Jiaotong University Classical Reading Recommendation List*. Annually around World Book Day (April 23) and Confucius’s birthday (September 28), the university organizes campus-wide classical reading promotion activities. Colleges and departments also host specialized reading events based on their characteristics, establish relevant online platforms at both university and departmental levels, and publish outstanding reading reflections in the *Classical Reading Series* to institutionalize achievements. These efforts have achieved universal and regular classical reading promotion across campus.

Recent changes in higher education policies have placed higher demands on university library reading promotion. Policy documents on university ideological-political work issued by the Party Central Committee and Ministry of Education constitute the essential contextual premise and institutional environment that libraries must respond to in their reading promotion efforts [4].

To better align classical reading promotion with university realities and meet student needs and expectations, the authors conducted a closed online questionnaire survey in November 2018 on Southwest Jiaotong University students’ classical reading cognition, habits, and expectations. The survey, distributed via Wenjuanxing platform, collected 2,025 valid samples. Statistical and cross-analysis using SPSS informed the innovation and optimization of classical reading promotion pathways.

2.2 Survey Collection and Analysis 2.2.1 Target Group’s Classical Reading Cognition

Analysis revealed that among respondents, 70.2% believed classical reading cultivates independent thinking, critical, and exploratory abilities; 69% considered it beneficial for developing humanistic literacy; 56.2% thought it facilitates self-examination and discovery; 48.4% viewed it as enabling cultural transmission,

preservation, and innovation; and 59.9% believed it provides a source of strength for facing the future (see Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]). These results demonstrate classical reading's profound appeal and influence among university students.

2.2.2 Target Group's Classical Reading Habits

The survey showed that 640 students (32% of respondents) read classics daily or frequently (see Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]). This finding slightly differs from the common conclusion that science and engineering students rarely engage in classical reading, indicating that various promotion methods can effectively encourage classical reading among this student population.

2.2.3 Target Group's Awareness of the University's Classical Reading List

Survey results indicated that 1,151 students (57% of respondents) were familiar with the university's classical reading recommendation list (see Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]). Cross-analysis revealed that those unfamiliar or completely unaware were primarily first-year students, indirectly confirming the impact of Southwest Jiaotong University's classical reading promotion efforts.

2.2.4 Target Group's Expectations for Classical Reading Promotion

The survey found that 63% of students hoped the university would continue strengthening encouragement and affirmation of classical reading behaviors (see Figure 4 [Figure 4: see original paper]), demonstrating the urgency and necessity of exploring new classical reading promotion pathways.

These findings indicate that Southwest Jiaotong University students possess a solid cognitive foundation and reading habits regarding classical reading, along with good awareness of the university's reading list. However, their expectations present practical challenges for library promotion work, prompting the library to explore a certification-based approach.

3. Certified Classical Reading Promotion

Certification is the process of evaluating and recognizing knowledge, skills, and attitudes [6]. Certified classical reading promotion refers to a model where university libraries collaborate with other campus reading promotion entities through literature, teaching, and ideological-political education to provide learning support and guidance for students' classical reading, measure and certify their classical reading knowledge and abilities, and provide evidence of their reading behaviors and achievements. This evidence holds validity in obtaining academic credits, hours, and other qualifications, thereby creating positive incentives for classical reading. This approach integrates pedagogical concepts of learning outcome certification into reading promotion work. While no dedicated theoretical research has been published domestically or internationally, scattered practical cases exist, such as the University of Electronic Science and

Technology of China's use of general education courses for reading promotion [7] and Anhui University of Technology's integration of reading promotion with the second classroom transcript system [8].

3.1 Certification Medium Booklist recommendation constitutes an important reading promotion method [9]. A classical reading recommendation list based on university students' cognitive and psychological characteristics, aligned with their reading literacy development patterns, serves as a fundamental tool for university reading promotion and an effective medium for certified classical reading promotion [10]. Southwest Jiaotong University's *Classical Reading Recommendation List*, first published in 2014, contains 96 classical texts (referred to as the "96 Classics"). Developed by university-organized experts and professors, the selected texts consider classicism, readability, compatibility, and timeliness, spanning Chinese and foreign works, ancient and modern periods, and covering humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, with particular emphasis on general education. Annually, the Classical Reading Recommendation List Working Group adjusts and optimizes the list by collecting authoritative domestic and international media and publisher recommendations and outstanding publications, comparing and screening collected information, and incorporating reader feedback through online surveys and sample interviews to investigate students' reading status. Based on these procedures, the working group makes moderate changes to the next year's "96 Classics" list, influencing readers by increasing guidance, reducing resistance, and expanding recognition [11]. Survey results show high awareness and recognition of the "96 Classics" among Southwest Jiaotong University students, making it a suitable certification medium and scope.

3.2 Certification Forms This case employs four certification forms: general education course certification, second classroom certification, Young Marxist Training Program certification, and reading workshop certification.

3.2.1 General Education Course Certification

The combination of general and specialized education represents an important direction for China's university general education reform. The *National Education Development "13th Five-Year" Plan* explicitly states: "Explore talent cultivation models that integrate general and specialized education, implement modular general education, and promote integration of arts and sciences" [12]. General education advocates classical text reading as a dominant teaching method. General education course certification involves offering seminar-based classical reading elective courses, with assessment, evaluation, and credit certification for enrolled students.

3.2.2 Second Classroom Certification

The second classroom refers to flexible, diverse, and comprehensive campus activities outside the first classroom teaching plan, designed to enhance students' comprehensive qualities and future-oriented capabilities [13]. Autonomous learn-

ing is a key characteristic of university learning and a major driver of the second classroom's emergence [14]. The second classroom serves as an important supplement to the first classroom, uniquely contributing to cultivating students' comprehensive qualities and non-intellectual factors [14]. Using the second classroom for classical reading promotion involves organizing flexible, diverse classical reading activities and lectures, with hour certification for participants in the second classroom transcript system.

3.2.3 Young Marxist Training Program Certification

In 2007, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League launched the "Young Marxist Training Program" (abbreviated as "Qingma Program") to enhance young student leaders' ideological-political quality, policy understanding, innovation capacity, practical ability, and organizational coordination, cultivating reliable successors for socialism with Chinese characteristics [15]. Theoretical study constitutes a crucial component of this program. Using the Qingma Program for classical reading promotion involves incorporating Marxist classical text reading literacy training modules, with learning experience certification for participating student leaders, cadres, and young intellectuals.

3.2.4 Reading Workshop Certification

Workshops originated from the term "workshop," initially applied in education and psychology. In the mid-1960s, Lawrence Harplin introduced it to urban planning as a method for people with different positions and backgrounds to think, discuss, and exchange ideas [16]. Reading workshops involve careful research, analysis, information retrieval, consultation, and discussion of specific topics or creative projects [17]. Using reading workshop certification for classical reading promotion encourages students to form small reading teams with teacher and expert guidance, conducting regular or irregular discussions, presentations, and creative activities related to classical reading, with credit certification for participants [18].

3.3 Evaluation Methods Certified classical reading promotion employs five evaluation methods: testing, conversation, presentation, observation, and evidence-based assessment.

3.3.1 Testing Method

Reading ability testing is crucial for improving reading levels. Effective diagnostic tools can stimulate interest, enhance ability, and improve outcomes [19]. In certified classical reading promotion, testing evaluates students' classical text knowledge and comprehension through examinations, applicable to general education courses and Qingma Program certification, particularly for competition modules.

3.3.2 Conversation Method

The conversation method involves one-on-one (or one-to-many) discussions between certifiers and participants, with certifiers using questions to assess reading levels and comprehension. Typically requiring two or more sessions, conversa-

tions include free and standardized formats. Free conversation has minimal restrictions to motivate participants, while standardized conversation follows predetermined questions and structure (also called structured interviews), allowing participants ample opportunity to demonstrate their reading engagement, critical thinking, and communication skills. This method applies to Qingma Program and reading workshop certification.

3.3.3 Observation Method

Observation assessment involves certifiers evaluating participants' presentations according to established criteria to determine reading volume and comprehension. This method applies to general education courses, Qingma Program certification, and reading workshop certification, particularly during student presentation sessions.

3.3.4 Presentation Method

The presentation method requires participants to describe their classical reading experiences and abilities through text and images, commonly using personal reading reports, self-statements, blog posts, and journals. This method applies to general education courses and Qingma Program certification, particularly during student presentations, and can also assess learning processes in second classroom certification.

3.3.5 Evidence-Based Assessment Method

Evidence-based assessment requires participants to provide evidence from reading contexts or related activities, including discussion screenshots, award-winning works, and certificates. Unlike observation, participants can autonomously select evidence. This method applies to second classroom certification, reading workshop certification, and Qingma Program certification, particularly during student presentations.

Notably, these five evaluation methods each have distinct advantages and disadvantages when applied to certified classical reading assessment (see Table 1). Their combined use ensures the authenticity and flexibility of the certification process.

4. Implementation Effects and Experience

4.1 Implementation and Results

Between January and December 2019, Southwest Jiaotong University Library implemented certified classical reading promotion through: (1) general education courses *Reading and Appreciation* and *Guide to Classical Masterpieces*; (2) second classroom certification through special lectures during World Book Day and Confucius's birthday celebrations; (3) Qingma Program certification through pilot programs with the School of Transportation's cadre training and library student association leadership training; and (4) reading workshop certification through the "Book Circle" program at Mao Yisheng College. These four certification forms certified 6,400 student

engagements (see Table 2).

4.1.1 General Education Course Certification Through Classical Reading Literacy Courses

Southwest Jiaotong University Library aligned with the Academic Affairs Office's general education curriculum system, offering two general education courses: *Reading and Appreciation* and *Guide to Classical Masterpieces*. The former focuses on intensive reading and sharing of thematic classical texts, while the latter emphasizes guidance on reading methods across different genres. Both are elective courses spanning one semester (32 class hours, 2 credits), using small-class teaching (typically \$ \$30 students). Instruction combines teacher lectures, student reading, seminar discussions, and student presentations, supplemented by Q&A sessions. Assessment evaluates seminar participation, presentations, and final report quality. Through these courses, 400 enrolled students received certification primarily through testing, observation, and presentation methods.

4.1.2 Second Classroom Certification Through Project Excellence Construction

Southwest Jiaotong University has implemented a “Second Classroom Transcript” system with seven modules: ideological-political and moral literacy, academic technology and innovation, artistic experience and aesthetic cultivation, cultural communication and interpersonal skills, psychological and physical quality, social work and leadership, and social practice and volunteer service. Classical reading appears as an important component across many modules. The second classroom requires 48 compulsory hours; all undergraduates from the class of 2017 onward must complete these hours to graduate. The library's classical reading lectures during the April 23 and September 28 celebrations are published in the Youth League Committee's second classroom system, with each lecture awarding 2 credits. Students register, check in and out, and submit learning reports (\$ \$1,000 words) after each lecture. This approach certified nearly 5,000 participating students primarily through evidence-based and presentation methods.

4.1.3 Qingma Program Certification Through Cadre Training

Southwest Jiaotong University has constructed a localized “four-dimensional integrated” Qingma Program training system comprising reserve talents, backbone talents, elite talents, and young teachers, cultivating young political backbone personnel for Party development and serving as a key basis for employment internships, selected graduates, and village official programs. The library collaborated with the School of Transportation's cadre training project, organizing classical reading lectures and sharing sessions. Additionally, the library's student association leadership training program incorporated reading literacy modules, using observation, conversation, and presentation methods to certify 500 outstanding student cadres and backbone members from the classes of 2017 and 2018, validating the Qingma Program certification form.

4.1.4 Reading Workshop Certification Through “Book Circle”

Southwest Jiaotong University encourages “reading workshop” formats for classical reading, exemplified by Mao Yisheng College’s “Tangchen Shuxiang” Classical Reading Engineering program. This initiative divides the university’s “96 Classics” into multiple themes with supplementary materials, conducting intensive reading activities on different themes each semester. Applications reaching 10 students constitute a reading workshop (“book circle”). The library collaborates with the college to guide students in creating online and offline reading communities, inviting experienced faculty as reading guides, providing dedicated reading spaces for classical texts, and guiding members to use e-resources for extended reading. Through this program, 150 participating students received certification primarily through presentation and evidence-based methods, validating the reading workshop certification form.

4.2 Experience and Reflections Southwest Jiaotong University Library’s certified classical reading promotion has created positive incentives for students’ classical reading behaviors, enhanced awareness and recognition of the “96 Classics,” guided students toward other classical works, and improved promotion effectiveness. Most importantly, it strengthened ties between the library and various promotion entities (colleges, Youth League Committee, Academic Affairs Office) while enhancing the library’s contribution to talent cultivation and ideological-political education.

4.2.1 Strengthening Deep-Level Collaboration Among Campus Reading Promotion Entities

Classical reading promotion is a university-wide systematic project requiring high-level coordination among libraries, student affairs, Youth League committees, and academic departments. These entities share the important responsibility of student quality education and comprehensive development, creating a unified purpose that forms the foundation for cooperation [11]. For libraries and ideological-political work, this represents both an innovation opportunity and a pathway to win-win cooperation [4].

4.2.2 Integrating Classical Reading Promotion into University Talent Cultivation Systems

From the library’s perspective, incorporating classical reading into higher education teaching and talent cultivation systems is crucial for ensuring effectiveness. Given the formidable tasks in university ideological-political work, relevant departments actively seek innovations and breakthroughs. Library classical reading promotion should consider comprehensive integration into ideological-political work, which would provide libraries with fresh vitality and greater development space while demonstrating their value in university construction systems.

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Author Contributions

Liu Yun: Proposed core research ideas and structure, drafted outline, and revised paper;

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Yang Yong: Data processing and proofreading;

Wu Rong: Collected and organized materials, proofread paper;

Li Ying: Collected and organized materials, proofread paper.

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